

JAN APPEL



MEMORIES



**PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &
DISCUSSIONS
FOR LAND & FREEDOM**

An introductory word to the 'anarchivé'
"Anarchy is Order!"

*I must Create a System or be enslav'd by
another Man's.
I will not Reason & Compare: my business
is to Create'*
(William Blake)

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism - of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives - a 'new' kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as 'Anarchy is order', 'Property is theft',...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The 'anarchivé' or 'anarchist archive' Anarchy is Order (in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the '**principles, propositions and discussions**' of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own

heritage. They don't belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the 'new anarchism' outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

'Anarchy Is Order' does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.

Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing from the CD that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts ,...Become your own anarchiv!!!

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchive offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*'demons of flesh and blood, that sway
scepters down here;
and the dirty microbes that send us dark
diseases and wish to
squash us like horseflies;
and the will-'o-the-wisp of the saddest
ignorance'.
(L-P. Boon)*

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us. Don't mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism, cooperation can be send to

A.O@advalvas.be

A complete list and updates are available on this address, new texts are always

welcome!!

MEMORIES

JAN APPEL

My name is Jan Appel, and I was born in a village in Mecklenburg in 1890. I attended elementary school and learned the shipbuilding trade. Even before my birth my father had been a Socialist. I myself became a member of the Sozial-demokratische Partei Deutschlands [SPD] on reaching 18 years of age. I saw military service from 1911 to 1913, and thereafter as a soldier in the War. In October 1917 I was demobilised and sent to work in Hamburg as a shipyard worker. In 1918 we called a strike of armaments workers. The strike held out for a whole week at the Vulkan-Werft. Our slogan was: 'For Peace !'. After one week the strike came to an end, and we had the War Clauses read out, for, according to the law, we were still under military service. At this time I belonged with the Left Radicals in Hamburg. When in November 1918 the sailors rebelled and the Kiel shipyard workers, we heard on the Monday from workers in Kiel what had occurred.

Thereupon a clandestine meeting was held in the shipyard, which was under military occupation. All work ceased, but the workers remained in position in the shipyard. A delegation of 17 volunteers was sent to the Trade Union headquarters, in order to demand the calling of a General Strike. We forced them

to hold a meeting. The result however was that well known leaders of the Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund [ADGB] and the SPD adopted a negative attitude towards the strike. There were sharp exchanges lasting many hours. Meanwhile a spontaneous revolt had broken out during the lunch break at the Blohm und Voss Shipyards, where 17 000 workers were employed. The workers left the factories and the Vulkan shipyards and appeared in front of the Trades Union Building. The leaders had vanished.

The revolution had begun.

In those days I had taken up a position in the forefront of the Left Revolutionary workers movement in Germany. As a speaker in the factories and at public meetings, as the Chairman of the Revolutionäre Obleute, [Revolutionary Shop Stewards], then only newly formed, and as a member of the Linksradikale Gruppe [Left Radical group], I now turned towards the Spartakusbunde [Spartacist League] and later began to play a leading role in the Hamburg District Organisation of the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands [KPD].

In January 1919 a large meeting of the Revolutionäre Obleute took place in the Trades Union Headquarters Building. This meeting was held after Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had been murdered in Berlin. It was at this meeting that I made the

acquaintance of Ernst Thälmann of the Unabhängige Sozial-demokratische Partei [USPD] or the Independent Social Democrats, and during the following night a march was held together with the USPD comrades to the barracks at Barenfeld. The guard and the sleeping soldiers were taken by surprise, and the arming of the workers was set in hand. We had 4000 weapons. After a good week of effort to build up a well-armed fighting force, those with arms began to disperse one after the other and disappeared along with their weapons. It was at this point that we arrived at the conclusion that the unions were quite useless for the purposes of the revolutionary struggle, and at a conference of the Revolutionäre Obleute, the formation of revolutionary factory organisations as the basis for Workers' Councils was decided upon. Moving outwards from Hamburg, propaganda advocating the formation of Factory Organisations [Betriebs-organisationen] was disseminated, and led to the founding of the Allgemeine Arbeiterunion Deutschlands or AAUD [the General Workers Union of Germany].*

In the course of this development and the accompanying clarification, in which process my main function was as Chairman of the Revolutionäre Obleute, I assumed, partially for organisational reasons, the additional function of Chairman of the Hamburg District of the KPD. It was in this way that I became a

delegate to the Heidelberg [Second] Congress of the KPD.

. . . .

Now it is 1966, some 47 years after the Heidelberg Congress. There is little point today in examining more closely the discussions and conclusions reached at this Congress. Suffice it to say that at the time it became clear to us that the line and policy of the KPD was designed to turn the main direction and aim of the Party towards participation in the bourgeois Parliament. Since it remained our wish to keep faith with the previously held convictions concerning the policy we were to pursue in relation to the revolutionary workers' movement in Germany, it now became impossible to continue as an organised tendency within the KPD. Shortly after this the Hamburg District of the KPD also came to this decision.

When, in Berlin in April 1920, the group of those in the KPD who held to the same view as the comrades in Hamburg, took steps to form the Communist Workers Party of Germany [KAPD], my participation in the KPD came to an end. Those were the days of the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch, and I took myself off to the Ruhr. Upon my return to Hamburg, I was informed that, at the Founding Congress of the KAPD, a delegation comprised of Franz Jung and myself had been elected in our absence to make the journey to Russia in order to

represent the KAPD at the Executive Committee of the Communist International [ECCI], then in session there. It was our task to give a report on the founding of the KAPD, to present its views and policy and to deliver the appropriate charges concerning the traitorous stance adopted by the Zentrale [Central Committee] of the KPD towards the struggle in the Ruhr.

It was impossible for us to make our way overland, and passage through the Baltic Sea was also closed. The sole available route open to us seemed to me to lie through the North Sea and the Atlantic, passing Norway and Cape North and so into the Arctic Ocean, to reach Archangelsk and possibly Murmansk. We were, however uncertain as to whether or not this area had been retaken by the Russians, that is if the Bolsheviks had reoccupied it. A short time previous to this a small news item had appeared in the press to the effect that the American fleet, together with its complement of troops which up till then had occupied the area, had now been withdrawn. In spite of this uncertainty, we decided to risk the journey. A comrade of my acquaintance, Herman Knörfen, was a sailor on board the steamship Senator Schröder. This ship made a regular four-weekly cruise to the fishing grounds around Iceland and, upon its return, stayed for at least a week in Cuxhafen. I made a search for Herman Knörfen. Just at

that time he happened to be in Hamburg, and the ship was in dock at Cuxhafen and due to start its outward voyage in three days time. Knörfen was willing, and the majority of the crew likewise - indeed, it was not for nothing that we were living in revolutionary times !

Franz Jung and I, with a further revolutionary sailor, embarked as stowaways. As we passed the northern tip of Heligoland, we arrested the captain and his officers at gunpoint and locked them up in the for'ard cabin. The journey began on the 20th April and ended on 1st May at Alexandrovsk, the seaport of Murmansk. We possessed sea charts only for the area up to Trondheim in Norway, and beyond that all we had to guide us was a small map in a sailing handbook, which offered a view of the globe looking down with the North Pole at its centre. The coasts of Norway, Russia, Siberia and Alaska were to be seen on the edges of this map. This was the sole means of navigation by which our new Master, Kapitän Herman Knörfen had to steer his course! At the northern tip of Tromsý [Hammerfest], we suffered two days of unrelenting storm followed by thick snow, so that any sight of the distant coast was obliterated. We were all extremely tired, since the uncertain situation made a continuous and wary watch imperative. In this way, dog tired, we sailed towards the south, seeking out the coastline or any speck of land where we might find some rest. It was nothing but blind good fortune that made us sail into the fjord of Alexandrovsk, so that we

were able to tie up to a buoy left behind by the American fleet. It required several further hours before we could be sure of our whereabouts or that the Americans had taken their leave. Behind the craggy wall of snow appeared a black column of smoke which, from a considerable distance, gradually approached us as we and our ship rested on the water.

Then, it seemed from out of the very wall of the cliff, a steam tug boat appeared, and finally we saw a large red flag. This was for us a sign that we had arrived in the Land of the Communists. After a while a motor-boat hove into view, filled with armed men. We took hold of a tow rope and sailed between the cliff walls inland in the direction of Murmansk. We were received as Comrades, and thereafter travelled on the railway, built during the war, to Petrograd now Leningrad [and of course since renamed Petrograd - Publishers Note]

In Leningrad, after we had spoken with Zinoviev, the Chairman of the Communist International, we travelled on to Moscow. There, a few days after our arrival, we delivered our statement to the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Our case was discussed, but as to who spoke and what was said I no longer have any recollection. However, we did not receive an honest reply, except that we were told that we were shortly to be received by Lenin himself. And indeed, this did then occur, after about a week or a little longer.

Lenin, of course, opposed our and the KAPD's standpoint. During the course of a second reception, a little while later, he gave us his answer. This he did by reading to us extracts from his pamphlet 'Left Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder' , selecting those passages which he considered relevant to our case. He held the manuscript of this document which had not yet been printed, in his hand. The Communist International's reply, delivered initially by Lenin himself, was that the viewpoint of the ECCI was the same as that of the KPD, which we had already left.

After a fairly long return journey via Murmansk and Norway, it became necessary for Jan Appel to disappear from view, and my activities in Germany were continued by Jan Arndt. Working whenever necessary to keep body and soul together, in Seefeld near Spandau and in Ammerndorf near Halle, and speaking in meetings from time to time - this was the tenor of my life. Much the same kind of activity took place in the Rhineland and the Ruhr, where I was also instrumental in organising the regular publication of the AAUD's journal 'Der Klassenkampf' [Class Struggle]. In 1920 the KAPD had been accepted as a sympathising party into the Third International. This had come about as a result of discussion between the ECCI and certain leading members of the KAPD. The latter consisted of Herman Gorter from Holland, Karl Schröder from Berlin, Otto Rühle

the former SPD Reichstag deputy, and Fritz Rasch. At the Third Congress of the Communist International in Moscow, we were afforded every freedom to express our point of view concerning the kind of policy which should guide our work. But we met with no agreement from the delegates from the other countries present. The main content of the decisions which were adopted at this Congress held that we should continue to cooperate with the KPD in the old unions and in the democratic assemblies, and that we should let drop our slogan 'All Power to the Workers' Councils!'

This was the well known policy as set forth in the '21 Points' which we should follow if we wished to remain an affiliated organisation of the Communist International. We, of course, spoke up against this and declared that a decision on this could only be taken by the relevant organ of the KAPD. This indeed was done upon our return. Then I went back to the Ruhr and to Rhineland-Westphalia to begin activity once again, just as before the Congress. This spell of activity was brought to an end in November 1923 as a result of my arrest. The immediate cause of this was the occupation of the Rhineland and the Ruhr by the French, but since the indictment was one of stealing a ship [ie piracy], this could only be heard in Hamburg. I narrowly succeeded in avoiding extradition [to the non occupied part of Germany] by representing myself as a political prisoner and invoking the assistance

of the French occupation authorities. However, since an extradition agreement between Germany and the Allied powers was imminent, I agreed voluntarily to a deportation order to Hamburg. There I was tried and sentenced, and so spent time in prison. This came to an end at Christmas 1925.

In April 1926 I went to Zaandam in Holland to earn my living as a shipyard worker. Immediately upon my arrival I wrote to a comrade, whom I did not know personally but whose address had been given to me. It was Henk Canne-Meijer. Together with Piet Kurman, he looked me up in Zaandam. Both held views identical to those of the KAPD, and they had broken with the Communist Party of Holland. But they had no contact with the existing KAP group in Holland. They were both good friends of Herman Gorter. We exchanged our views and experiences, and held regular meetings with others of like mind. In this way we gradually crystallised into a group which we called the Group of International Communists [GIK]. The publication of our positions and analyses took place through the PSIC [Press Service of International Communists], which is the information organ of the International Communists.

During my time in the remand prison in Düsseldorf, a period of altogether seventeen months, I had found the opportunity to study Volumes I and II of Marx's Capital. Coming as I did from years of revolutionary struggle,

followed by internal factional strife within the Communist Movement and the recognition of the fact that the Russian Revolution had led to the consolidation of a state economy under the rule of a party apparatus, such that we were compelled to coin the term 'state communism' or even finally 'state capitalism' in order to describe it, I finally came to reach an overall unified view. The time for considered, consciously evaluated thought had arrived; the time at which one allows all past experience and activity to pass in review before one's inner eye, so as to find the road which we workers must take in order to leave behind the oppression of capitalism and to reach the liberating goal of communism.

As a revolutionary worker, I came through a study of Marx's Capital to understand the capitalist world as I had never understood it before. How it is compelled to follow an intrinsic, law governed development; how its basic order unfolds over a long period, overcoming all conditions inherited from the pre-capitalist past in order to consolidate its mode of production, and thus forming the seed bed for new and yet more intense contradictions in its internal order; how it brings about ever and again new changes to its internal social structure, but simultaneously its most basic contradictions are pushed forward to new and ever more glaring levels of antagonism. It first expropriates the working people from the soil and their piece of land; then it appropriates their independent means

of life and so creates the conditions in which it can also appropriate the products of their labour. The right of disposal over the fruits of labour, and hence over the producers themselves, falls into ever fewer hands. Furthermore, the truth that the sole achievements of the Russian Revolution were that the Russian Communist Party had been constituted as a totally centralised despotic instrument of power, equipped with all necessary means for exercising state oppression over the still dispossessed and propertyless producers was a fact we were forced to recognise.

But our thoughts went further: the most profound and intense contradiction in human society resides in the fact that, in the last analysis, the right of decision over the conditions of production, over what and how much is produced and in what quantity, is taken away from the producers themselves and placed in the hands of highly centralised organs of power. Today, over forty years after I first came to this awareness as I sat in prison, I see this development unfolding to an ever greater degree in all parts of the world. This basic division in human society can only be overcome when the producers finally assume their right of control over the conditions of their labour, over what they produce and how they produce it. On this subject I wrote many pages while I was in prison. It was with these thoughts in mind and with the writings relevant to them, that I

arrived in Holland to see the Group of International Communists.

....

Today, in the year 1966, forty years have passed since we first met together in Amsterdam as the Group of International Communists [GIK], in order to express our new thoughts and to discuss them. The knowledge that the Russian Revolution was leading to the establishment of state communism, or more accurately state capitalism, represented a new school of thought at the time. It also necessitated disillusioning oneself of the view that a Communist form of society, which also implies the liberation of labour from the shackles of wage-slavery, would be the necessary and direct outcome of the Russian Revolution. It was likewise a wholly new conception to concentrate one's attention upon the essence of the process of liberation from wage-slavery, that is to say, upon the exercise of power by the factory organisations, the Workers' Councils, in their assumption of control over the factories and places of work; in order that flowing from this, the unit of the average social hour of labour, as the measure of the production times of all goods and services in both production and distribution, might be introduced.

In this way money and all other forms of value would be abolished and so deprived of their power to manifest themselves as Capital, as

the social force which enslaves human beings and exploits them. This knowledge and its fruit, gained over long periods of work in the Group of International Communists in Amsterdam, have been brought together in ordered form in the book 'Fundamental Principles of communist Production and Distribution' [Grundprinzipien kommunistischer Produktion und Verteilung], published by ourselves. It consists of 169 pages of typewritten script. In order to gain a brief insight into what is written there, the following excerpt from the Foreword may be quoted:

'The Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution had their origin during a 4 year period of group discussions and controversy within the Group of International Communists of Holland. The first edition appeared in the year 1930 in Germany, published in Berlin by the Neue Arbeiterverlag [New Workers Publishing House], the publishing organ of the AAUD, the revolutionary factory organisation. On account of financial difficulties, a Dutch edition in the desired format and published at the required time proved to be beyond our capabilities. Instead, it was published in serial form as a supplement to the Press Information Service of the Group of International Communists, [PSIC] On account of the translation, this edition is not quite identical with the German one, although nothing essential in the content has been altered. The only amendments were in

the order in which the material was presented and in the various formulations, in order to attain a clearer presentation. It is hoped that the 'Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution' will lead to a thorough discussion and so contribute both to greater clarity and to unity of aim within the revolutionary proletariat, and so result in the various tendencies adopting a common course.'

In a new edition it was written:

'This book can only express in economic terms what must first be achieved in the sphere of political action. For this it was necessary to begin, not merely with the abolition of private property in the means of production, but with the elimination of wage labour as such. It is from this basis that all our thoughts proceed. Our analysis therefore led to the inescapable conclusion that, once the workers have won power through their mass organisations, they will be able to hold on to that power only provided that they eliminate wage-labour from all economic life and instead adopt as the nodal point of all economic activity the duration of labour time expended in the production of all use values, as the equivalent measure replacing money values, and around which the whole of economic life would revolve.'

The German edition of the year 1930 was later seized and destroyed. A short précis was

subsequently published in New York, and also a German version in the journal 'Kampfsignal' [A call to struggle]; whilst in 1955 in Chicago, an English language version appeared in 'Council Correspondence'.

I participated personally in the political activity of the GIK in Holland. In April of 1933 it was made known to me that 'a friendly Germany' wished to see me once again. I was to be expelled as an 'undesirable alien' ! However, the helpful Police Commissioner in Amsterdam afforded me the time in which to bring my personal affairs into order. The moment had come once again to go 'underground'. Jan Appel once more disappeared from the scene. When, later, the Second World War finally broke out, I began to play a part in the resistance movement directed against the régime of the Hitler fascists, who had occupied the country in 1940.

After Sneeveliet, the well known leader of the Left in Holland, together with between 13 to 18 other comrades, had been executed by firing squad, we continued to pursue the resistance struggle with the remainder of the comrades. After 1945 we published the weekly journal 'Spartacus'. This continued until 1948. As a result of a serious street accident which I suffered at this time, I had to be placed in hospital, and so once again reappeared on the surface of social life. A testament from over 20 bourgeois citizens, good and true, was

required in order to protect me from being simply pushed over the border ! That I had been active in the resistance movement decided the issue in my favour. Jan Appel made his appearance once again, but it was necessary for him to refrain for a time from all political activity.

This is also the end of this volume of my life history.

Jan Appel

1966

*English readers should note that a Trade Union in German is Gewerkschaft so 'Union' was a new kind of organisation - [Publishers Note]